

# American Revolution

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Women

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## Roles of Women During the Revolutionary War

Most women during the Revolutionary War stayed home and took care of the farm or the family business while their husband was off at war. They had to learn new skills and take on extra work. Some women, however, took part directly in the war.

*Betsy Ross*

Source: U.S. Library of Congress

**Nurses** - Many women worked as nurses for the Continental Army. They assisted doctors and took care of the sick. This was a dangerous job as they were constantly exposed to the many diseases that were common in army hospitals.

**Spies** - Women also worked as [spies](#). Officers from both sides tended to talk freely around women believing that they wouldn't understand military terms and strategy. This made women powerful spies who could gather top level information.

**Camp Followers** - Some women worked as camp followers during the war. They would follow the army camp and help take care of the soldiers: mending clothes, cooking meals, and cleaning up the camp.

**Soldiers** - Women were not allowed to serve as soldiers in the army, but this didn't stop some women from fighting. They disguised themselves as men and used fake names when enlisting. Some women served for quite a long time before being discovered.

## Famous Women During the War

- [Abigail Adams](#) - Abigail Adams was the wife of Founding Father John Adams. She advised her husband through thousands of letters. She lived close to the fighting and at one point melted down much of her own silver and steel to make musket balls for the troops.



*Mercy Otis Warren*  
by John Singleton Copley



- Kate Barry - Kate Barry made a famous ride to warn the Continental Army that the British were coming. Her warning helped the Americans win the Battle of Cowpens.
- Lydia Darragh - Lydia acted as a spy when she overheard some British officers discuss a pending attack on the Continental Army. She got a message to an American soldier and George Washington was ready for the British when they arrived.
- Mary Draper - Mary Draper is famous for doing everything she could to help the American troops. She used cloth and metal from her house to make coats and bullets. She also set up a table by the road to hand out food to troops as they passed by.
- Nancy Hart - Nancy Hart was known as a staunch patriot who often worked as a spy for the Americans. She is most famous for holding off a number of British loyalists in her home (shooting two of them) until help arrived.
- [Molly Pitcher](#) - Molly Pitcher is the nickname given to Mary Ludwig. She is famous for taking her collapsed husband's spot loading a cannon at the Battle of Monmouth.
- Betsy Ross - Betsy is credited with sewing the first American flag for George Washington.

*Deborah Sampson* by Herman Mann

- Deborah Sampson - Deborah disguised herself as a man and enlisted in the Continental Army. She fought in several battles and was shot twice.
- Mercy Otis Warren - Mercy was an influential writer whose works promoted the rights and cause of the American colonists. She also advised many important American leaders.
- [Martha Washington](#) - Martha supported her husband George throughout the war. She stayed with her husband at Valley Forge where she comforted the wounded and boosted the morale of the soldiers.



### Interesting Facts about Women During the Revolutionary War

- Early on in the war women nurses made two dollars per month. Their salaries were raised to eight dollars per month by the end of the war.
- A lot of women became camp followers because they were poor and wanted to work for food.
- Wives of soldiers were sometimes allowed to work as camp followers in order to keep the husbands from quitting the army.
- The army often set fixed prices for doing laundry in order to keep the women from taking advantage of the soldiers. The women could get in big trouble if they overcharged.

### Activities

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